

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-IL), issued the following statement about H.R. 2956 -- the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, legislation to change course in Iraq.

Jackson said, "Under new Democratic leadership, the U.S. House of Representatives is determined to take decisive action to reverse our present, perilous course in Iraq. Despite President Bush's stubborn refusal to face the grim, hard facts about his failed policy, this Congress offers a responsible, sensible and urgent change in direction."

"With today's vote, Democrats demand 'a halt' to President Bush's headlong, factually immune, ideologically-blinding drive toward the deep abyss of failure and ruin. In the face of Iraq's continual deterioration into sectarian violence, real leadership must do more than merely mouth the hollow rhetoric of 'stay the course.' Democrats want to make an about-face and redefine U.S. priorities, which include bringing American soldiers home, effectively fighting terrorism and protecting our vital national security interests," Jackson said.

Consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act requires a redeployment of U.S. troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008. In addition, it requires the President to publicly justify the post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq and the minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

"President Bush says today's report is a 'cause for optimism' about Iraq. It is not. While our troops have performed heroically, violence in Iraq remains high, the Iraqi government has failed to meet key benchmarks, political reconciliation is an illusion and Al-Qaeda is resurgent. It's long past time to adopt this bill, carry out the will of the American people and end this tragic war," Jackson concluded.

Now in its fifth year, the war in Iraq has cost 3,600 American lives and \$450 billion. Since the announcement of the President's "surge," more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, approximately 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.